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Letter dated 21 August 2008 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my latest report to the Security Council concerning the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2008/425), I hereby request the Security Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is due to expire on 31 August 2008. In a letter dated 18 August 2008 addressed to me, the Prime Minister of Lebanon requested that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of one year, without amendment.

The total number of military personnel, as of 15 July 2008, stands at 12,284. That number includes 10,705 UNIFIL ground troops deployed in two sectors and 1,323 personnel serving in the Maritime Task Force, in addition to 194 staff officers at UNIFIL headquarters, 45 staff officers at UNIFIL sector headquarters and 17 national support elements. Additional units from Indonesia and Malaysia, along with a few outstanding specialized units, will deploy to UNIFIL in the near future. The UNIFIL civilian component has been strengthened, and now numbers 325 international and 627 national staff.

I am grateful to the 27 troop-contributing countries that make up UNIFIL for their ongoing commitment. This commitment, coupled with the development of a strong peacekeeping partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has enabled the successful implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). However, as the UNIFIL mandate approaches its expiration date, it is clear that more work remains to be done.

UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in southern Lebanon as well as full respect for the Blue Line. Under the terms of its mandate, UNIFIL continues to take all necessary action it deems within its capabilities to ensure that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is not utilized for hostile activities.

In addition, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continue their efforts to ensure that the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River is free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces is a cornerstone of the UNIFIL mandate, as outlined in resolution 1701 (2006) and reiterated in resolution 1773 (2007). As I have noted in previous reports to the Security Council, the Lebanese Armed Forces is under significant pressure to fulfil its many security responsibilities throughout the country. I hope that the recent formation of a new government will contribute to an

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improvement of the overall security environment that would permit, in the near future, the return to southern Lebanon of units of the Armed Forces that have been redeployed to maintain security in other parts of the country. I would also reiterate that it remains essential that the international community assist the Armed Forces to become a more effective military organization, resourced to fulfil its many responsibilities, including down to the Blue Line.

I also would like to express my strong appreciation to the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major-General Graziano, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL for the work they are carrying out in southern Lebanon in the service of peace.

Regarding the financial aspects of UNIFIL, by its resolution 62/265, the General Assembly appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the total amount of $650.76 million gross for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of the Mission beyond 31 August 2008, the cost of maintaining it will be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly.

As of 31 May 2008, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNIFIL Special Account amounted to $141 million. At present, money owed to the Member States that contribute the troops who make up UNIFIL totals $13.9 million. Reimbursement of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs have been made for the period up to 31 May 2008 and 31 March 2008, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full in order to clear all remaining arrears.

With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of 12 months, until 31 August 2009.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon